

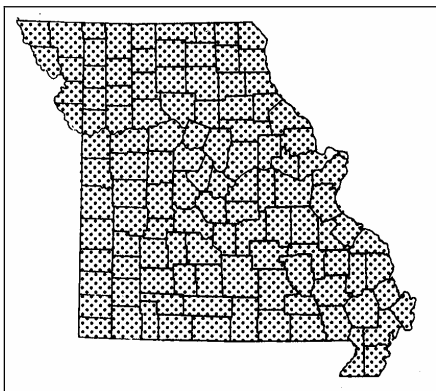
Soft Maple

Acer spp.

The two most common species in this group are red maple (*A. rubrum* L.) and silver maple (*A. saccharinum* L.), which are combined in the lumber trade. Other names may be swamp maple and white maple. The name “soft” is a little misleading and generally only used to distinguish it from the hard maple. Soft maple grows throughout the state, with the red maple species found only in the southern half. It is typically a bottomland species, requires moist soils and is usually found with sycamore, elm, boxelder, ash, hackberry and cottonwood. Soft maple will grow in areas subject to fairly frequent flooding.

The sapwood is white to off-white; the heartwood varies greatly, from pale tan to reddish gray and often with brown streaks. The bark is gray, thin and smooth on large trunks, broken into long, thin scales. It has no characteristic odor or taste and is usually straight-grained. Soft maple works well with tools, is moderately hard and glues well. It finishes smoothly and is stable when dry. The wood is diffuse porous and the growth rings are not very distinct. It is fine textured.

The most important use of soft maple is in the furniture industry. It is used for the same purposes as hard maple except where strength and hardness are a primary requisite. The lower grades go into boxes, crates and toys, paneling and core stock for veneers. It is not durable and will not stand outdoor exposure. It is a common ornamental tree around homes and along streets, although it does break up in ice storms. It is an excellent wood for the home workshop and is commonly available. Boxelder is also commonly included with the soft maples in commercial trade.



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